



Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

432 Quarterline, Newaygo, MI 49337 * 231-652-6624

Jonathan Reidel, Pastor



"An Open and Affirming Church"

*No matter who you are,
no matter where you are on life's journey
you're welcome here!*



THE CHURCHMOUSE

- JULY 2024 -



Numbered

*"Even the hairs of your head are all counted.
Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows." Luke 12: 7 CEB"*

Why don't you write a column about numbers?" The Book of Numbers or numbers in the bible in general? "In general. You know, phrases like "forty days and forty nights" means a long time. How Lent is Jesus' forty day journey to Jerusalem. How Noah was on the ark for forty days and forty nights Seven days of creation. The Trinity. Why are numbers so important? What are they supposed to mean?" I was glad that she did not want to discuss the Book of Numbers. But numbers themselves are often a mystery. It has been many years since I have studied mathematics. I remember being good at memorizing the rules and the methods behind simple addition all the way through calculus, but the reasons for doing all this mental exertion often escaped me. It was not until I studied statistics in college and discovered that math could be used as a way to monitor and to understand the ebb and flow of human opinion and activity that math came alive to me. I began to see how math affected how we present ourselves, how we make our livings, and how we organize the lives we lead in ways that make sense. In ways that help organize our universe so we do not feel so overwhelmed. Numbers are our first manner of organization. When we were hunters and gatherers, we counted the mouths that needed to be fed and compared that to the amount of food we had. We calculated how to organize cities and towns by the angles of the terrain and what balances we needed to have in place to ensure enough water. We conquered and left people alone by the size of their populations and the area of their land versus the radius of our weapons. We valued lives by their longevity and by the dash between their birth and death dates. No, numbers do not capture everything that makes us wondrous as human beings, but they provide enough intriguing insights to whet our curiosities. Numbers give us something to hang our lives upon. It is no wonder that many people have imbued number with power. They seem to contain some strange sort of a magic in the way they repeat and coincide in our lives. Some of us break the universe into twos-light and dark, hot and cold, good and evil, living and dead. Others see more varied shades - three for the work of God, seven for the days of the week, 13 that contains all the rotten luck of our lives, the multitudinous layers of turtles that our earth rests upon (according to one ancient legend), and the square root of 2 that many alchemists used as a sign of secret knowledge - all of these concepts were appreciations of the number's acumen. I rather doubt that humans could navigate their lives without them. We are always determining value by counting something, even when we pretend that it is quality, not quantity that matters for us. It is not surprise, therefore, that Christians and Jews find meaning in the numbers written in the Bible. I suspect that every chapter and verse (numbered



divisions, after all) has had the numbers they contain examined more extensively than perhaps any other book. We have tried the date of the end of history by adding the years mentioned by the prophet Daniel, among others. From this, we derived the rather incredible and controversial theory of the Rapture, a vivid enough understanding to have inspired miles of film and hundreds of pages-not to mention hours of words. We have looked at numbers used as metaphors in the Psalms and tried to take them literally. This is why Matthew has Jesus riding both a donkey and its colt during the parade into Jerusalem. He never quite understood that repeating the idea of a line twice is a way doubling down on your point. We have borrowed phrases from the Bible to capture our world. Somehow saying something took forty days and forty nights encapsulates the slow drawing of time better than just saying that it took a while. Moving around and examining the Bible's numbers can be very entertaining and perhaps insightful when it comes to measuring our own hopes and insecurities. It remains to be seen what they completely tell us about God. I wonder if we use numbers when it comes to God for the same reason we use numbers when it comes to everything else. We want to get a hold of something. We want to capture. Perhaps we even want to control just a piece of God's majesty and might. We want to organize in a humanly manageable way God's mystery. That effort might lead us into some strange and perhaps dangerous alleys, but I understand why we feel compelled to do it. In the end, we think that God has some use for numbers as well. I know many denominations who focus on the number of people that God will welcome home to heaven after they die. I know many churches who are convinced that God divides by two on the basis of some preconceived choice or by the actions of people God is working with. In other words, some will be allowed to live out eternity in peace and others will suffer endlessly for misdeeds both known and unknown. Those are mysteries perhaps best left to God. I am fascinated though by what Jesus suggests about every hair on our head is noted, is recognized as worthy of consideration. We matter. We count. We have value. Even the sparrows have some worth n God's eyes. In a world that turns people into numbers and renders their lives into the lowest common denominators, to worthy of being numbered in God's eyes is love indeed. It meant the world to the poor and the broken that Jesus talked to. It should count for something for us as well.

The Rev Jonathan D. Riedel-Pastor,
Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ

Volunteers Needed

We will host a booth and children's game during the Kids' Expo. This is part of the National Baby Food Festival on the main street of Fremont. We will run our booth from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday, July 17. How can you help? We need people to set up, to tear down, to help the kids fish for prizes, and to offer a smiling welcome to the best of Newaygo County. Contact Gloria at 231-652-6624 if you would like to volunteer. You will be asked for two hours of your time.

Brother Sun, Sister Moon

Our July Adult Forum will feature another take on the life of Saint Francis, Franco Zeffirelli's 1973 film, Brother Sun, Sister Moon. This youthful and enthusiastic retelling shows how Francis was one of the greatest rebels and game-changers of all time. We will meet in the main Sunday School room for a time of viewing and discussion. We meet on Tuesdays at noon.

Church Visioning Sunday

During our worship service, we will have a special presentation by the Rev. Lawrence Richardson, the Michigan Conference's Associate Conference Minister of Church Vitality and Transitions. After a time of prayer and reflection, he will be guiding us through a time of thinking about the possibilities about our church's future and of taking ideas that help get the word out of what we can offer our greater community. We will welcome all ideas from voting members and friends at this gathering so please plan to come. Rev. Richardson will be joining us for Fellowship Time for further conversation. This event will take place at 10 a.m. on July 14th.



Financial Report
June 20, 2024 Board Meeting

January Income: \$5,287.00 (3 weeks due to 1 week missed due to weather)
January Expenses: \$7,187.76
Difference: (\$1,900.76)

February Income: \$12,362.00 (includes \$6,000 from Phillips Fund for property insurance)
February Expenses: \$13,444.44 (includes insurance payment of \$7,697, a \$1,727 increase from last year)
Difference: (\$1,082.44)

March Income: \$6,580.00
March Expenses: \$6,456.94
Difference: \$123.06

April Income: \$6,418.00
April Expenses: \$6,209.80
Difference: \$208.20

May Income: \$4,265.00
May Expenses: \$7,315.12
Difference: (\$3,050.12)

June Income: \$2,123.00 as of 6/16/24
June Expenses: \$8,678.24 (includes \$6,500 for M&SA Phillips Fund distributions)
Difference: (\$6,555.24)
(\$55.24) not including Phillips Fund distribution

Phillips Fund as of 5/31/24 \$168,446.63 Up \$5,188.57

Family Fund as of 5/31/24 \$82,769.64 Up \$2,350.62



Thank You

A special "THANK YOU" to those who helped erase the financial deficit caused by the recent loss of some of our dear long time members. Your generous donations in support of the church are very much appreciated.

NCUCC Board of Directors

Wednesday Night Prayer

Wednesday Night Prayer Time 7 pm. Call 978-990-5000 then 283560#

Ways to Worship with Us

Here is a reminder of the different ways that our worship services are available to you. ♦ Everyone is welcome to attend our services in-person every Sunday at 10 am. ♦ You can also access a live audio/visual broadcast using ZOOM on your computer or smart phone by using the following link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/184864699096>

Those without internet access can call the following phone number and Meeting ID:
1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 848 6469 9096.

If you would like to access the services on your own schedule, they are added to our website www.newaygoucc.org and Facebook page following each service.

Links to Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve services are provided as needed.

Prayer Room/Chapel

Anyone who wishes to have a small quiet place to pray or meditate is welcome to use the room across from the nursery to do so.

The room is open during the secretary's office hours and on Sunday morning.

Deadline for the August Churchmouse

Please send any information or articles you would like included in the June






Churchmouse to the office by

Friday, July 26

You may e-mail information to:
Churchmouse@newaygoucc.org
or leave a hard copy in the office.



July, 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 Independence Day Office Closed 	5	6
7 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom Communion	8 Worship and Pastoral Care 10 am on, phone and in Pastor's Office	9 Mission & Social Action 4 pm Noon Class 	10 7 pm Prayer	11 Meal for NA Chapter 6:30 pm Fellowship Hall	12	13
14 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom	15	16 Noon Class 	17 7:00 Prayer	18	19	20
21 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom	22	23 Noon Class 	24 7:00 Prayer	25	26	27
28 Worship Svc. 10 am In person, phone & Zoom	29	30 Noon Class  Churchmouse Deadline	31 7:00 Prayer			





Anniversaries in July

19 George & Ann Passage

3 - Sheila Raterink
 4 - Marilyn Spaulding
 8 - Jane Porter
 15 - Holly Spaulding
 16 - Jean Smith

19 - Ann Passage
 21 - Paul Eno
 23 - Linnea Godfrey
 28 - Fred Veenstra
 29 Miriam Strohpaul



July Worship Schedule on ZOOM

Worship is in person and on ZOOM at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/184864699096> or phone 1-312-626-6799 ID: 848 6469 9096

July 7 - Communion
 Matthew 18:23-35
The Stories of Jesus - Unforgiven

June 14 - Church Visioning Sunday
 Guest Speaker - *The Rev. Lawrence Richardson*

July 21 - Luke 12:13-21
The Stories of Jesus - Fools

July 28 - Luke 14:7-24
The Stories of Jesus - Feasts

